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SUBJECT: KING RECALLS PARLIAMENT FOR EXTRAORDINARY SESSION

REF: A. AMMAN 1410
[B.](#) 06 AMMAN 6167
[C.](#) AMMAN 1384
[D.](#) AMMAN 1185

[11.](#) (SBU) King Abdullah issued a decree on April 5 recalling Parliament for an extraordinary session, a move that some GoJ contacts were not expecting (ref A). The session, which begins April 15, will probably last one month, and will consider eight government-drafted bills.

[12.](#) (SBU) Jordan's constitution provides that the King sets the legislative agenda for extraordinary sessions. The April 5 decree calls for parliament to debate the following bills:

-- Military Service) Would reinstitute a mandatory three-month national service.

-- Reformed Anti-Money Laundering Legislation) Would give the government authorities to establish a Financial Intelligence Unit that meets international standards.

-- Freedom of Information) Would improve journalists' and other citizens' access to government deliberations and records.

-- Nuclear Energy bill) Would update the role and authorities of the Jordan Atomic Energy Commission (JEAC). This move is part of the government's recently renewed interest in exploring the development of peaceful uses of nuclear energy in Jordan.

-- Nuclear Regulatory Authority bill) Would establish a new nuclear regulatory entity for Jordan, separate from the JAEC, charged with radiological monitoring and public safety. USG initiatives such as Megaports and Second Line of Defense would benefit from this bill.

-- Military Housing Fund bill) Related to benefits for military personnel.

-- Government Ombudsman bill) Would establish authorities for a new senior official charged with enhancing government efficiency.

-- A bill updating real estate laws

Comment

[13.](#) (SBU) The Palace placed 42 bills on the agenda for last year's extraordinary session, and achieved passage of less than half. Of the eight bills on this year's agenda, military service and anti-money laundering will likely be the most contentious.

¶4. (SBU) The government has been attempting, through regular and extraordinary sessions of parliament over the past three years, to obtain parliament's assent to an improved anti-money laundering legislation (AML). Key obstacles have been parliamentarians' (inaccurate) belief that the law would reduce the competitiveness of Jordan's financial sector, and their (accurate) impression that the USG strongly supports the bill (refs B and C).

¶5. (SBU) Jordan's political class will also focus on debate over the military service bill, which follows the government's announcement that it would seek to establish a mandatory three-month national service program for 18 year-olds. Males would be put through military training and civic education, females through civics courses only (ref D). Some grumbling is likely as more Jordanians realize what the new national service requirements would entail, especially for young women. The known personal support of the King for this initiative should mute debate. Conscription is unpopular with the professional leaders of the army as well; they view it as an expensive distraction.

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